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Deri's Security Concerns Preceded Israel's Strike on Iran

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In the lead-up to Israel's unexpected military operation against Iran on 13 June 2025, Shas chairman Aryeh Deri reportedly urged Rabbi Moshe Maya, a key spiritual leader within the ultra-Orthodox party, to delay a potential Knesset vote that could have destabilised the government. According to a recording aired by Army Radio, Deri cited "security reasons" for

the request, a cryptic reference that appears to have foreshadowed the assault on Tehran's regime.

In the broadcast, Rabbi Maya explained that Deri did not disclose specific details but stressed the urgency of postponing the vote. "He sent an emissary to ask if we could delay for a week due to security concerns," Maya recounted. "I didn't press for details. I agreed, and then the war began." The rabbi's comments shed light on the delicate political manoeuvring that preceded Israel's calculated strike.

The context for Deri's request stemmed from a contentious political standoff. On 12 June, Shas and United Torah Judaism, frustrated by delays in passing a bill to exempt yeshiva students from military service, were prepared to support an opposition motion to dissolve the Knesset, a move that would have triggered early elections. However, a last-minute compromise brokered by Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee chairman Yuli Edelstein averted the crisis. The opposition's bill failed, and the coalition held firm.

Reports suggest that both Deri and Edelstein were informed of general security concerns, influencing their decision to prioritise stability, but it is unclear whether they had specific knowledge of the impending military operation. An unnamed US official, according to Maya, also played a role, warning against dissolving the Knesset in the lead-up to the strike. While the official's identity remains undisclosed, Speculation has pointed to US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, who was reportedly engaging with coalition members to encourage political stability amid rising regional tensions. Huckabee, however, has publicly denied these claims.

The timing of these events underscores the intricate balance between Israel's domestic politics and its strategic military decisions. The ultra-Orthodox parties' grievances over the military draft exemption had threatened to unravel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition at a critical juncture. By securing a delay, Deri and his allies ensured the government's cohesion ahead of the high-stakes operation.

This episode highlights the broader challenges facing Israel's coalition government, where internal divisions often collide with external pressures. The decision to prioritise national security over immediate political gains reflects the gravity of the situation as perceived by key figures like Deri and Edelstein. As the dust settles on the Iran operation, questions linger about the extent to which foreign allies, particularly the United States, influenced Israel's political calculus.

The delicate interplay of religion, politics, and security continues to shape Israel's path forward, with leaders like Deri navigating a complex landscape to maintain stability in turbulent times.